

Delaware agriculture critical to supplying consumers with food during COVID-19 outbreak

DOVER, Del. – The Delaware Department of Agriculture continues to provide services to the public and industry to ensure that our food supply remains safe and plentiful for consumers during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak.

“As Delaware’s number one industry, family farms are crucial to supplying a variety of food from poultry and meats, fruits and vegetables, and many value-added products,” said Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse. “We take the health and safety of our employees seriously, but we realize that even during the outbreak, that we have a duty to our constituents. The Department will remain open, but we will be making changes to minimize risk to our employees.”

Farmers will be active over the next few months as planting season is underway. Secretary Scuse has asked for flexibility from the public as guidance surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak continues to change. Members of the public are encouraged to call ahead before coming to the Department. Non-essential meetings are being canceled or moved to online/teleconference to enable social distancing. The following changes to programs or processes are in effect:

- Agriculture Compliance Lab: Samples must be dropped off in the entrance of the lab.
- Communications and Marketing: The informational grant workshop scheduled for March 24 is canceled. If you have questions, please contact Jo-Ann Walston at 302-698-4592 or email joann.walston@delaware.gov. Guidance is being developed for farmers’ markets and on-farm markets.
- Delaware Standardbred Breeders’ Fund: Delaware

Standardbred Breeder's Fund Races are not scheduled until June at Harrington. Yearling and 2-year old payments due on May 15th and should be mailed or paid online by credit card.

- Food Products Inspection: The Produce Safety Alliance training scheduled for March 24 has been postponed. The On-Farm Entrepreneurs Food Safety Training with University of Delaware Extension has been postponed. Dates will be announced in the future. There are no changes currently for customer contact information.

- Delaware Forest Service: Until further notice, the Redden Lodge is closed. All state forest campsites are closed, and no gatherings of more than 25 people are permitted on state forest property. All Arbor Day events are canceled.

- Delaware Harness Racing Commission: Until further notice, casinos and racetracks in Delaware are closed. The Delaware Harness Racing Commission (DHRC) has cancelled our monthly meetings for March and April and will provide any needed public information electronically.

- Aglands Planning and Preservation: The March 18 Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation meeting will be conducted virtually.

- Nutrient Management: Farm visits will be limited to reduce the chance of spreading coronavirus.

- Pesticide Management: All pesticide testing has been canceled until further notice. Any insect samples can be left at the front desk along with your contact information.

- Plant Industries: All seed for testing should be placed in the large mailbox outside the building marked Seed Lab. Hemp Producer applications should be emailed, and changes are coming to the physical license.

- Poultry and Animal Health: Samples may be brought to the front lobby for submission. No one will be able to walk samples back to the labs.

- Thoroughbred Racing Commission: Until further notice, casinos and racetracks in Delaware are closed. The stable has been opened for training.

- Weights and Measures: Complaints should be submitted using the online complaint form at <https://agriculture.delaware.gov/weights-measures/>.

For more updated information related to the Department of Agriculture and COVID-19, refer to <https://agriculture.delaware.gov/news>. For the latest information related to Delaware's response to COVID-19, visit <https://de.gov/coronavirus>.

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